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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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OPERATION CORPORATE: OPERATIONAL ARTIST'S VIEW OF THE FALKLAND
ISLANDS CONFLICT

by

Richard C. Dunn

Lieutenant Colonel, USMC

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: Richard C. Dunn

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This paper reviews the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict between Argentina and Great Britain from the operational artist's viewpoint. This paper focuses on the political considerations, strategic objectives and operational factors, including objectives, centers of gravity and forces employment. The objective is to provide the reader with lessons learned at the political, strategic and operational level and provide specific recommendations which impact at the operational level of war. This paper does not cover the long history of negotiations between the parties in dispute, U.S. involvement or the tactical aspects of the conflict. This paper does cover the political, strategic, and operational factors which are important for the operational planner. The Falklands conflict provides the U.S. planner with important lessons learned applicable for future employment of U.S. forces at the operational level of war. The Falklands conflict occurred due to both countries' failure at the political and strategic level of decision making to correctly analyze their opponents reactions to diplomatic and military actions. The implications for the warfighting CINC are that he must utilize the JOPES planning system to be prepared militarily for an unexpected crisis while at the same time utilize the PPBS system to ensure his warfighting needs and shortfalls are addressed during the budgeting process. In the end, it is the politicians who must provide the CINC warfighters with the proper "tools" to prosecute the military campaign.

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On 2 April 1982, after more than 16 years of inconclusive diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain, Argentina launched Operativo ROSARIO, a military campaign designed to take by military means what the Argentine government could not secure by political means: the Islas Malvinas or what the British and the Islanders call the Falklands.¹ As happens in many such instances, the Argentine government miscalculated the political resolve and military response of their British opponent. Refusing to accept the Argentine military action as a "fait accompli", the British government responded to the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands with Operation CORPORATE, a military campaign to regain her lost territory. Great Britain, a major world political power and NATO member, and Argentina, a 3rd world nation with major power aspirations, resorted to military force to resolve their political differences over the future of a small cluster of mostly uninhabited islands in the South Atlantic. Thus began the Falkland Islands conflict.

This paper will analyze the Falkland Islands conflict from the viewpoint of an operational commander. To facilitate this process, three general areas will be reviewed: (1) political considerations, (2) strategic objectives, and (3) operational factors, including objectives, centers of gravity (COGs) and employment of forces. Based on my conclusions, specific recommendations will be offered which directly impact on the operational level of war for the U.S. commander.

WHY THE FALKLANDS?

The Falkland Islands conflict provides an excellent case study of a major world power fighting, at the end of a long logistics line, a Third World country in a regional conflict using modern weaponry. Both countries faced a combined air, land, and sea threat and employed joint forces at the operational level of war. This conflict provides valuable lessons learned applicable today to U.S. operational commanders planning regional contingency operations in the post-Cold War world. In view of the downsizing of the U.S. Armed Forces and the ongoing evaluation of the military service's roles and missions, examination of the British experience in the Falkland's conflict from an operational commander's perspective has implications for future employment of U.S. force structure and lessons applicable at the operational level of war.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fact that Britain and Argentina resorted to military force to settle a long standing dispute over a few sparsely inhabited islands in the South Atlantic seemed incomprehensible to most Americans in April 1982. However, this abject failure of diplomacy should be viewed in light of both countries' domestic political situations and international conditions existing at that time.

In Argentina, the country was ruled by a military junta composed of President Galtieri (who served as Commander-in

Chief of the army also), Admiral Anaya, the naval member, and Brigadier General Dozo, the air force member. As was common in many Latin American countries of that time, social, economic and political ills plagued the military junta. Domestic turmoil was fueled by massive inflation rates, falling industrial output, rising unemployment, and dropping wage rates. Repression by the military had suppressed political opposition but the junta needed an external diversion from internal problems. The Malvinas, the Argentinean islands seized forcibly by Britain in 1833 and "illegally" occupied by British settlers ever since, provided the one issue that could unite all Argentines.² This unifying political issue was coupled with international conditions that seemed favorable, as viewed by President Galtieri, to the use of limited military force to seize the Malvinas.

The total political and diplomatic miscalculation by the Argentinean government to the British reaction to the initial Argentinean military invasion action revolved around several key assumptions. President Galtieri and his most ardent supporter of military action, Admiral Anaya, felt that:

1. Britain would not use military force to regain the Falklands,
2. The United States would remain neutral throughout the dispute,
3. The U.N. would eventually accept the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands as a proper settlement of

their long standing claim to the islands,

4. Argentinean diplomacy would successfully cast Argentina as the "injured party" in the eyes of world opinion.

While there were some international indicators that led Argentinean government leaders to arrive at those judgments, the fact that all four of the assumptions proved wrong spelled both political and diplomatic disaster for Argentina. A study of the British domestic political situation and her view of international conditions reveals why Argentinean "gunboat diplomacy" failed.³

At first glance, it would seem President Galtieri made some proper, rational assumptions based on observed British behavior. The British government, headed by Conservative Party Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher since May 1979, had looked to the restructuring of the military as a means to fix a bleak financial Treasury and provide additional funds for an ailing domestic economy. Army planners were focused on Britain's contribution to a NATO continental army. Royal Air Force (RAF) planners were focused on strategic bombing. Naval planners, under the scrutiny of fiscally minded politicians, were forced to focus on the Royal Navy's (RN) contribution to NATO and the Soviet Northern Fleet. For example, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the British government planned to sell HMS HERMES to Chile and transfer HMS INVINCIBLE to Australia. (Both these two small VSTOL carriers, the only two left in the British inventory at the time, proved invaluable

to the British war effort). In effect, the British government had forced on the military commanders an armed forces structure optimized for the Soviet NATO threat and designed to be integrated with the U.S. and other NATO allies. Lost to the RN due to fiscal constraints was flexibility, versatility and autonomous capability, reducing it to the auxiliary role of a specialized antisubmarine warfare (ASW) force.⁴

In the South Atlantic, the British government seemed to be losing its political will. The forty two Royal Marines stationed in the Falklands, serving only as a "trip-wire" to force the Argentineans to have to "fire the first shot", were certainly no match for a serious invasion force. The only British naval presence in the South Atlantic, the lightly armed Antarctic survey vessel ENDURANCE, was to be retired in June 1982 after its current tour and not replaced.

A summary view of the British military restructuring is that Britain, traditionally a maritime power, was shifting its emphasis toward a more continental posture, being threat driven to focus on a single scenario, single threat in NATO. At the same time, Argentina, traditionally a land power, was attempting to become a maritime power, acquiring an aircraft carrier, a cruiser, other surface craft and conventional submarines. Argentina had expressed seriousness of purpose and raised the possibility of armed intervention in the Falklands while Britain expressed a willingness to negotiate. However, Britain's restructuring of its armed forces had

limited its capability to respond militarily to an Argentinean invasion and its reduced naval presence in the South Atlantic signalled a weakening of political will. Therefore, from Argentina's perspective, the time was ripe for limited military force to regain the Malvinas.

For Britain's part, the collision that took place between the aging British whale and the faltering Argentine elephant on the shores of the Falklands was due to a policy failure of the British government to either:

1. cede the Falklands to Argentina or
2. defend them with a credible deterrent presence.

Furthermore, the British miscalculated that Argentina would not attempt to acquire by military means what Britain could not concede by diplomatic means, thereby forfeiting the advantage of strategic surprise and initiative to Argentina. The British, when forced to make a political decision *ex post facto*, had to resort to military action to regain the Falklands because:

1. Britain could not suffer the humiliation of defeat or allow her major world power reputation to be damaged,
2. The islanders were British and had consistently indicated their desire to remain British,
3. The Falkland Islands Committee was a very powerful lobby in both Houses of Parliament,
4. Domestic popular support for the war effort, in both Great Britain and Argentina, precluded negotiations.

Thus, political miscalculations on both countries' parts played a crucial role in the Falklands conflict.

The lessons for the U.S. operational planner at this political level are:

1. The operational planner must have a working knowledge of the national security and military strategies of the United States and how the operational level of war interfaces with those strategies;

2. The U.S. warfighting CINCs must understand the political and economic, as well as the military aspects of the nations in their area of operations and those nation's relationship with the U.S.

3. The U.S. warfighting CINCs must honestly appraise potential crisis situations when such situations arise and be prepared to take appropriate military action early in order to prevent strategic surprise. Politicians rarely want to believe the worst in a crisis because if they do, they must take drastic military action that will have unpleasant economic and political costs and could further de-stabilize what everyone hopes is a threatening but manageable crisis.⁵ Therefore, it is up to the CINCs and operational planners, working closely with the intelligence and state department members of their staff, to analyze the indications and warning "signals" of potential crises and be prepared to execute OPLANS when diplomacy fails. In short, while operational planners are not "politicians", they must be fully aware of

the political and diplomatic nuances in their geographic area of responsibility (AOR). A thorough understanding of the history of the region will provide the CINC and his staff an idea of what a country may do based on past actions. After all, when diplomacy fails, operational commanders will be called upon to achieve political objectives by the use of military force.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

At the political/strategic level, the Argentinean objective was to evict the civilian authorities and the British military forces from the Islas Malvinas, South Georgia, and South Sandwiches so as to restore these territories to Argentine national sovereignty (see map, p. 33). Britain's objectives were to force the withdrawal of Argentinean forces in order to regain sovereignty over those same islands, restore her standing as a world power and confirm the principle of self-determination for the Falkland Islanders. For both countries, the control of the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich "trinity" meant being in position to exploit the world's last reserves of oil, minerals, and sea riches in the Antarctic.⁶ Therefore, the strategic stakes were high on both sides.

At the strategic level, the British COGs were the will of the British people to support the war, the political will of the British government to conduct the war and the military means to wage war over 8,000 miles from Britain. Argentina

misjudged the stern determination of the British people to support their government, a surprising miscalculation given the response of the British people to WWI and WWII. Also, President Galtieri "mirror imaged" the role of women in Argentinean society to the role of Margaret Thatcher. Argentinean officials, living in a male dominated society, did not think Prime Minister Thatcher, a woman, would want a war, would ever politically direct a war, and therefore she would be the weak link in the British military chain. They had underestimated their opponent, Margaret Thatcher!'

For Argentina, the strategic COGs were the will of the Argentinean people to support their government and the military junta government's ability to remain in power to prosecute the war. The British were no better at judging the strength of their opponent's Clausewitzian triangle (people, government, military) than were the Argentineans. The British put together an impressive armada of warships, centered around two V/STOL aircraft carriers. Most members of the British armed forces and civilian government felt that the well publicized sailing of such an impressive force would be enough, when coupled with U.N. condemnation of Argentina's actions, to coerce the Argentinean government into a diplomatic settlement. Unfortunately for Great Britain, the Argentinean popular support for the Malvinas "liberation" left the military junta no diplomatic "maneuver" room.

Despite the well publicized sailing of British warships,

the truth of the matter was that Britain had been caught by strategic surprise.⁸ The British political and military leadership had NO existing contingency plan to execute, despite the fact that the Falklands had been a crisis area affecting British national interests for years. As Major-General Sir Jeremy Moore wrote, Great Britain was going to war

"at the end of a seven and a half thousand miles long logistic pipeline, outside the NATO area, with virtually none of the shore-based air we normally counted on, against an enemy of which we knew little, in a part of the world for which we had no specific plan or concept of operations."⁹

The lessons for the U.S. operational planner at this strategic level are as follows:

1. The "show" of impressive, superior military forces may not be enough to achieve a diplomatic settlement.¹⁰ The operational commander must prepare his forces mentally and physically to execute military plans to achieve political objectives.

2. Operational planners must understand the importance of the Clausewitzian triangle at the political/strategic level, in terms of U.S. strengths and weaknesses as well as potential adversaries Clausewitzian strengths and weaknesses. The operational planner must build his military campaign to exploit his enemy's weaknesses and protect friendly COGs, at both the strategic and operational levels of war.

3. Currently, CINCs, as directed by CJCS, maintain OPLANs on all contingencies that could affect U.S. vital national interests. However, CONPLANs or Concept Summaries should be

developed, based on the CINCs own estimate of the situation, on regions where potential vital or major national interests lie. The J-5, working closely with the J-2, J-3, the State Department liaison officer and other members of the CINC staff, must ensure that various regions in the CINCs AOR are adequately covered by Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) plans."¹¹

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

At the operational level, the Argentinean objective was to defend Port Stanley, the seat of government for the Malvinas. For the British, the objective was the recapture of Port Stanley, site of the humiliating act of lowering the Union Jack and former seat of government of the Falklands. The Argentinean COGs at the operational level of war were the military forces in the Falklands, especially at Port Stanley, and the Argentinean ability to resupply those forces. For the British, the COGs were its two, V/STOL aircraft carriers, with their complement of aircraft and helicopters, and the British ability to resupply Task Force (TF) South over an extremely extended line of communication (LOC).¹² Had it not been for Ascension Island, a refueling and resupply point roughly midway between Britain and the Falklands, the British could probably not have fought and won the Falklands conflict.

For both Great Britain and Argentina, the task facing the respective military commanders was to craft a military campaign at the operational level of war designed to achieve

operational objectives that would in turn achieve the political/strategic results desired. The basic British military campaign, formulated after the invasion had already taken place, outlined four main purposes:

1. Establishment of a sea blockade around the Falklands
2. Repossession of South Georgia
3. Gaining of sea & air supremacy around the Falklands
4. Eventual repossession of the Falklands¹³

The British military campaign plan provided for the simultaneous execution of the diplomatic and economic campaigns. The War Cabinet was in direct control of the overall war strategy and could adjust the intensity of operations as events dictated. Admiral Fieldhouse, CINCFLT, stationed in Northwood, England, was the operational commander of all land, air, surface vessel, and submarine forces in the South Atlantic, thus adhering to the military principle of unity of command. Admiral Fieldhouse exercised direct control over his subordinate component commanders, a feat made possible by superb satellite communications.

The original Argentine military campaign plan, Operativo AZUL, had been formulated from plans first developed in 1968. In December 1981, following the lack of progress in diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain, Admiral Anaya ordered the head of Naval Operations to update the plans to occupy the Malvinas. Because the timetable for the invasion of the Malvinas was moved up from July to April, the rushed plans

encompassed only the actual invasion and not a strategy for defending the Malvinas thereafter, a serious flaw. The basic Argentine military campaign plan outlined the following purposes:

1. Capture the British military garrison, civilian authorities, the airport and Stanley itself
2. Maintain the small Argentinean military force on South Georgia (This force had been landed on 24 March to protect a handful of Argentinean scrap metal workers)
3. Keep the small Argentinean presence in the South Sandwiches (established there in 1976)
4. Establish an Argentinean administration with a small garrison of 500 troops left to maintain order¹⁴

The Argentinean military campaign plan depended on secrecy, speed of execution, and the minimal use of force (part of their rules of engagement, ROE) in order to reduce British military and civilian casualties. The fact that no British military or civilian personnel were killed during the initial battles indicates that Argentina's application of the ROE was successful. In effect, the flag of Argentina flew over Stanley without the loss of any British life. The problem with the Argentinean plan was that it depended on a **diplomatic** response from Great Britain, not a **military** response. By keeping the invasion bloodless, it was hoped that the British would react with only protests. A cease-fire and negotiations of the sovereignty question would result

along with withdrawal of Argentinean forces as a gesture of goodwill. The Argentinean political and military leadership had failed to properly plan for the most threatening enemy course of action: use of military force to retake the Falklands. Clausewitz tells us that "...at the outset of a war its character and scope should be determined on the basis of the political probabilities ...the more imperative the need not to take the first step without considering the last."¹⁵ The military junta's failure to consider the last step before the first step cost them the war.

Once it became clear that the British response would be military and diplomatic plus economic, the military junta could do only one of two things:

1. Reinforce Stanley and prepare to defend the Malvinas by military force, or
2. Comply with U.N. Resolution 502 and withdraw.¹⁶

The military junta was unable to comply with U.N. Resolution 502 because it would give the appearance of weakness in the face of the British military response. Additionally, the resolution did not prevent the British from retaking the Falklands once the Argentinean forces had withdrawn. The decision to reinforce the Malvinas with military forces meant Argentina had lost the diplomatic initiative to Britain.

The change in situation spelled disaster for the Argentinean military campaign. The military principle of unity of command was violated. The military junta, who had

the last say, ruled by consensus. There were continued problems with the military command structure. The services tended to operate independently and innumerable arguments occurred over division of roles and responsibilities.¹⁷

EMPLOYMENT OF FORCES

GENERAL

The British and Argentinean employment of military forces at the operational level of war provides a study in contrast. In general, the British made effective operational and tactical use of all the various types of military forces, ranging from special operating forces through the continuum to nuclear submarines. The British military personnel were an all volunteer force, well trained and highly motivated. The synergistic effect of the integrated employment of such professional air, land and sea forces, acting within the principle of unity of command and executing a sequenced campaign plan, proved decisive in the British victory.

In contrast, Argentina's military junta did not make effective use of all the various types of military forces. While it is true that the virtually unopposed invasion of the Islas Malvinas on 2 April did use various types of forces (submarines, special forces, naval task forces), the ad hoc nature and disjointed command and control structure of the subsequent defense of Stanley proved a decisive element in the Argentinean defeat. The Argentineans failed to integrate their forces and attack the British COGs. The conscripts sent

to defend the Falklands were poorly trained and led, did not adapt well to the harsh South Atlantic winter, lacked motivation and were not supported well logistically.

SURFACE (Naval and ground)

The British employment of naval and ground forces was offensively oriented. TF South, centered around the aircraft carriers INVINCIBLE and HERMES, was designed to project power in the form of the sea blockade around the Falklands, provide the forces needed to recapture South Georgia, provide the naval and air power needed to gain sea and air control supremacy and become the critical source of offensive power in the effort to retake the Falklands. In fact, naval power projection was the key to the invasion and repossession of the Falklands.¹⁸ The amphibious assault ships HMS FEARLESS and INTREPID, the last two remaining amphibious ships in the British inventory, along with five logistic landing ships, provided the necessary ships to put ground troops (marines and army) ashore.

The problems faced by the RN surface fleet revolved around deficiencies in air defenses, specifically the lack of: early warning radar aircraft, an integrated anti-air warfare (AAW) command and control system and long range interceptor aircraft. British skill and ingenuity did provide some innovative solutions, such as Sea King helicopters equipped with Searchwater Early Warning Radar, use of hand-held BLOWPIPE surface-to-air IR missiles on board ships and Sea

Harriers operating in the air-to-air role.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the catastrophic loss of HMS SHEFFIELD to an Argentinean Exocet missile, the first such use in modern warfare, and the damage inflicted by Argentinean air on other British surface ships underscored a RN tactical weakness that could have had strategic consequences, particularly had HERMES or INVINCIBLE been sunk.²⁰ Despite protests from his staff, Admiral Woodward's protection of the fleet by repositioning it farther to the east underscored the RN's tactical weakness in air defense which caused operational weakness due to its adverse impact on British employment of forces.

The amphibious operation and subsequent operations ashore undertaken by the British were critical to the successful outcome of the war. In the final analysis, the air and naval campaigns were subordinate to the land campaign. Putting forces ashore on East Falkland to retake Port Stanley, the operational objective, was required in order to bring the Falklands back under British sovereignty, the political goal.

Time and logistics were critical factors for the landing. The weather in the South Atlantic was getting progressing worse and the fleet's major logistics requirements would be exhausted by the end of June. However, the amphibious landing, Operation SUTTON, suffered from failure to gain air supremacy or command of the sea. Also, the British had to land in on the west side of East Falkland due to concern for the mines planted in the bays around Stanley (see map, p. 34).

Nevertheless, the British calculated risk of landing at Port San Carlos despite those shortcomings (fog of war, friction, uncertainty) was successful due in large part to the minimal resistance offered by the Argentinean ground forces, the achievement of operational surprise by the choice of landing site, the RN Harriers effectiveness in the air-to-air role and the Argentinean surface navy's inaction. However, the lack of helicopter support due to the loss of the ATLANTIC CONVEYOR to an Exocet missile forced the breakout from the beachhead to be done on foot instead of by vertical lift. Subsequent operations ashore point to a lack of Argentinean operational planning and interservice rivalry. Even the hard fighting, though inept defense, over the high ground around Port Stanley was insufficient to stop the better led, trained, physically fit and professional British soldiers.

Before leaving the ground war, one battle needs to be specifically mentioned. The political leadership in London, facing pressure from the opposition party, the press, and the public, directed that Brigadier Thompson, the land forces commander, seize Goose Green-Port Darwin, a militarily illogical objective.²¹ Though successful politically and militarily, the battle for Goose Green underscores the primacy of politics throughout the operational campaign.

SUBSURFACE

The use of HMS SPARTAN and HMS SPLENDID, both nuclear powered submarines dispatched to the South Atlantic prior to

the Argentine invasion on 2 April, provided the British with an effective "display of force" that could have been withdrawn quietly had a diplomatic solution been found prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The sinking of Argentina's cruiser GENERAL BELGRANO by HMS CONQUEROR, a nuclear attack submarine, demonstrated to the Argentinean junta the seriousness of British resolve and will, and the effectiveness of British submarines. The sinking of the BELGRANO coupled with the imposition of the military exclusion zone around the Falklands to twelve miles off Argentina's coast effectively neutralized the entire Argentinean surface navy for the duration of the war, thus providing the RN with "sea denial".²²

AIR

British air operations were both defensive and offensive in nature. Defensively, Britain relied on the RN Sea Harrier, outfitted with AIM 9L Sidewinder missiles, to provide the bulk of the fleet AAW defense and to protect the amphibious landing at Port San Carlos. Though heavily outnumbered, the British task force commander was able to generate a far greater number of sorties a day with his RN Harriers compared to his opponent. This superiority in sortie generation enabled the RN Harriers to do a tremendous job of protecting the fleet against Argentinean air attacks during the crucial 21 - 25 May timeframe of Operation SUTTON.

Offensively, the British tried to use retrofitted Vulcan strategic bombers in a conventional role. After extensive

modifications and intensive aircrew training, five Vulcan bomber missions, code named BLACK BUCK, were flown. Although the missions undertaken were not tactically significant (only minimal damage was done to the Stanley airport, no damage to the radar site), they did have the effect of forcing the Argentinean government to retain its only radar-equipped fighters for air defense alert in case of heavy British bomber strikes against the mainland.²³ The other offensive aircraft, the RAF GR 3 Harrier, flew over 150 air-to-ground combat missions in support of the ground forces in the Falklands. Lastly, in a critical support role, British helicopters contributed significantly to the effort in logistics resupply, medivac, ASW, troop movement and insertion of special operating forces (which proved crucial in determining the eventual landing site of the amphibious operation).

ARGENTINE FORCE EMPLOYMENT

In stark contrast to the British integrated use of all forms of combat power at the operational level of war, the Argentinean employment of forces was demonstratively defensive and tactical in nature. The Argentine surface navy, after an abortive attempt to seek out the British fleet at sea on 1 May, went entirely on the defensive ("fleet-in-being") after the sinking of the BELGRANO. The land forces, devoid of an operational plan, were left to operate independently and suffered accordingly.²⁴ The minimal ground force resistance to Operation SUTTON, the lack of organized resistance against

the British march across East Falkland, and the ineffective defense of the high ground around Stanley point to Argentinean ground forces that were outgunned, outmanned and outfought.

In the subsurface arena, Argentinean conventional submarines attempted to be offensively oriented but were outclassed by their British counterparts. Though generally ineffective tactically (no known British losses due to Argentinean subs), the fact that Argentina had conventional submarines caused Admiral Woodward much concern.²⁵

Only in the air did Argentinean forces consistently display an offensive nature. Argentina's Air Force organized "Air Force South" in an effort to take the battle to the enemy.²⁶ The Argentinean Naval Air Arm contributed significantly by combining the Super Etendard aircraft and the Exocet missile into an effective weapons platform that helped to shape the battlefield operationally. The Argentinean air forces stationed in the Malvinas attempted to use the Pucara ground attack aircraft against British forces in South Georgia, Goose Green and Port San Carlos but were not generally effective.

In actuality, the air war in the South Atlantic was tactical in nature since the Argentines failed to consolidate their resources into a coherent operational campaign. Had the Argentines sank a high value target such as the HERMES, FEARLESS or CANBERRA, a strategic effect might have been accomplished using tactical means. Tactical

failures due to insufficient time over the target, failure of bombs to detonate and inability to distinguish strategic targets all combined to make the impact of the Argentinean air power tactical, vice operational or strategic in its effect.

The lessons for the U.S. operational planner at this operational level of war are as follows:

1. In order to deter war, it is crucial to have credible forces already on station in the crisis area in advance of potential hostilities.²⁷

2. During the negotiations phase, the operational employment of a strategic weapon system like the nuclear submarine can provide a "show of force" that can be quietly withdrawn as the situation dictates.

3. In a democracy, political pressure brought to bear by an impatient public/media/opposition party can force upon the operational commander tactical objectives which are not useful militarily to the overall campaign. Operational planners need to understand the primacy of politics as the nature of war.

4. The United States, like Britain, is an island nation. Power projection for an island nation requires naval power projection capability against the entire continuum of threat intensity. In order to effectively employ naval power and minimize losses to the fleet, an integrated battle plan, covering anti-surface warfare, ASW, and AAW, must be provided for in-depth. Britain's lack of an effective AAW defense in-depth nearly cost it the war.

5. In order to conduct operations from the sea, naval, air, and specially trained land forces are required. The operational commander needs to insist on flexibility and versatility by having multiple means of employing his available forces (vertical lift, ship-to-shore amphibians). In order to minimize losses and enable the forces on the beachhead to work effectively, local control of the sea and air are essential. The lack of these elements cost the British dearly in ships and lives lost, and in having the enemy operationally shape the battlefield at sea.

6. In order to achieve the operational (territory) objective, domination of the land by ground forces was essential. Just as in WWI, the conflict for the British could be lost at sea but only won on the ground. The British had to put forces on the ground to eventually retake Port Stanley, the operational objective, in order to defeat the Argentinean forces and achieve political and strategic victory.

7. The operational planner and commander must know the friendly and enemy COGs at both the strategic and tactical level. The operational campaign plan, using proper phasing and balanced forces in an integrated fashion, must attack the enemy's COG (Britain's sequential campaign plan to retake Port Stanley) while protecting the friendly COG (Admiral Woodward's protection of his carriers). Failure to understand or properly identify COGs will spell disaster on the battlefield.

8. The advent of modern technology and its exploitation

to 3rd world countries poses serious problems for the operational planner. The lethality of the Exocet missile, the threat posed to the fleet by diesel electric submarines and mines, the use of satellite communication/imagery by 3rd world countries and now the proliferation of modern weaponry from the former Soviet Union must be factored into the equation by operational planners when constructing contingency plans against 3rd world nations. The United States, like Britain, could find itself facing an array of sophisticated weaponry manufactured by NATO countries (including the United States).

9. Operational planners must understand the criticality of logistics and factor this into their planning equation. In fact, logistics is the dominant factor at the operational level of war - it controls the "op tempo". Logistics needs to be exercised during peacetime just like communications and operations. Had it not been for Ascension Island and civilian vessels pressed into service, Britain could not have conducted the war.

CONCLUSIONS

The Falklands conflict was made inevitable by British defense policy and structure decisions coupled with strategic miscalculations made by both Argentina and Great Britain. For Argentina, use of definitive limited naval power to force Britain to accept a "fait accompli" proved to be a grave miscalculation. When Britain resorted to military force to retake the Falklands, Argentina's failure to strategically and

operationally adapt to this new set of circumstances indicated a failure of Argentina's government to clearly think through the last step before taking the first step.²⁸

For Britain, caught by strategic surprise with no contingency plans developed and lacking in sufficient military means available to prosecute a war far distant from her shores, the ultimate successful achievement of her political goal resided in the ingenuity, resourcefulness, labor-industry cooperation and military adaptive force employment. The skill, bravery, and professionalism of Britain's all volunteer force in conducting the necessary tactical operations helped to overcome some of Britain's shortcomings at the operational level of war.

At the highest political/strategic level, the critical miscalculations and wrong assumptions that governed both nation's decision-making processes point to an abject failure of analysis as a cause of the Falklands conflict. One can only imagine the outcome had President Galtieri waited a few more months before he invaded the Malvinas. In that time, Britain would have had no naval presence in the South Atlantic, no aircraft carriers or amphibious assault ships left in the inventory, the remainder of the fleet would have been on deployment around the globe and the weather would have been worse. Thus, President Galtieri failed to make effective use of all the available factors. Perhaps the greatest lesson for the political/military leadership of the United States is

that "structuring one's forces in accordance with what is 'affordable' rather than what is militarily effective, is the surest way to military disaster - and in the long term the most expensive defense program of all."²⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some specific recommendations for U.S. operational planners based on the Falklands conflict are as follows:

1. U.S. operational planners must be continually attuned to the political, economic, diplomatic and military developments in their CINCs AOR. The CINCs "strategic estimate" is crucial to this process. Particular attention must be paid to weaponry proliferation.

2. The JOPES planning process must be effectively utilized to develop needed contingency plans, available to be executed on short notice should a crisis arise.

3. U.S. warfighting CINCs have the absolute requirement to provide their unbiased input into the Planning, Programming, Budgeting System (PPBS) via the CINCs Strategic Priorities Report. The types and amounts of forces and equipment required by the CINCs to accomplish their mission based on JSCP priorities must be identified, shortfalls noted and addressed via the Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs) and CINC Preparedness Assessment Reports (CSPARS). This is especially critical during this time of debate on roles and missions and free falling defense budgets.

4. The CINCs must continually express the need for

adequate air and sealift in order to emphasize the critical importance of those wartime factors in mission accomplishment.

5. The CINCs must, even in this era of smaller budgets, maintain sufficient funds to exercise their forces. These exercises need to include logistics so that problem areas can be discovered in peacetime, not in conflict.

In summary, the Falklands conflict provides the U.S. operational planner with lessons learned applicable for future employment of U.S. forces at the operational level of war. In the final analysis, though, CINCs are dependent on the political leadership for the U.S. capability to "selectively engage" across the spectrum of conflict based on specific interests and objectives. The CINCs need the flexibility and option of choosing from a wide variety of forces capable of engaging in the complete continuum of missions. When the warfighting CINCs reach into their "purple toolbox", the proper "tools" for the specific job need to be available.

NOTES

1. UN Resolution 2065, dated 16 December 1965, was a non-binding resolution for the two parties to proceed without delay to find a peaceful solution to the problem, keeping in mind the interests of the population of the Falkland Islands. Great Britain agreed to negotiate on those terms; sixteen years of bilateral talks followed. See Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, Signals of War The Falklands Conflict of 1982 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 8. I used the codeword "ROSARIO" for the Argentine invasion although some sources cite the name "AZUL". See Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, p. 109.

2. Martin Middlebrook, Task Force The Falkland Islands, 1982, (London: Penguin Press, 1987), p. 36. For a well written discussion of the history of the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty issue, see Richard D. Chenette, LCdr, USN, The Argentine Seizure of the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands: History and Diplomacy (Alexandria, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1987), pp. 1 - 37.

3. Sir James Cable, "Gunboat Diplomacy's Future," Proceedings, August 1986, p. 38. In this article, Sir James defines "gunboat diplomacy" as the use or threat of limited naval force by a government, short of an act of war, in order to secure an advantage or to avert a loss - either in an international dispute, or against foreign nationals within a territory or the jurisdiction of their own state. He argues that Argentina intended only a definitive use of limited naval force. In choosing war, Britain foiled Argentina's use of gunboat diplomacy. My view is that the Royal Marines at Port Stanley and the British public viewed Operativo ROSARIO as an act of war.

4. Sir James Cable, "The Falklands Conflict," Proceedings, September 1982, p. 74.

5. For an excellent discussion of all the various products, services, strengths and limitations of intelligence for the operational planner, see John Macartney, Intelligence: What It Is And How To Use It, January 1990.

6. Middlebrook, p. 32.

7. James A. Haggart, LCdr, USN, The Falkland Islands Conflict 1982: Air Defense of the Fleet (Alexandria, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1984), p. 7. Obviously, President Galtieri and the military junta had not studied Sun Tzu who said "Know your enemy and know yourself; your victory will never be endangered."

8. For a detailed, well written analysis of the Falklands War from the viewpoint of intelligence indicators, warning signs, and implications for the U.S., see Gerald W. Hopple, "Intelligence and Warning Lessons," in Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War, eds. Bruce W. Watson and Peter M. Dunn (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 97 - 125. Hopple argues that the Falklands conflict was essentially not foreseeable, and in the short term, probably not avoidable. He provides some useful intelligence lessons to the U.S. operational planner:

(1) The internal politics of the antagonist's country must not be neglected in the strategic warning analytical process; and

(2) Analysis needs to be conducted in an integrated fashion. Military intelligence needs to incorporate political, economic, and even cultural and sociological information/assessments into its analytical process.

9. Middlebrook, p. 68.

10. Admiral Lewin, speaking as British Chief of Defence Staff, stated: "The most important lesson to learn in the Falklands conflict is this: If you hope to deter an aggressor from attack, you must have capable, well equipped forces readily available. But above all else, you must demonstrate that you have the political will to use them." Haggart, p. 84.

11. For a detailed discussion of JOPES, the deliberate planning process, crisis action planning and various other strategic and operational level of war planning factors, see the Draft Supplement To The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1991 AFSC Pub 1, May 1992, chapters 2 and 3, and AFSC Pub 1, The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1991, chapters 6 and 7.

12. British Admiral Woodward, TG 318.1 commander, viewed the INVINCIBLE and HERMES as his friendly COGs. Admiral Woodward requested on 2 May to use the submarine HMS CONQUEROR to sink the Argentine cruiser BELGRANO. On 4 May, he repositioned his aircraft carriers 160 miles further east of Port Stanley to make his carriers safe from Argentine Super Etendards carrying Exocet air-to-surface (ASM), anti-ship missiles. These actions clearly demonstrate at the operational level of war that the war could be lost by the destruction of a British aircraft carrier. Indeed, not since Jellicoe in WWI had it been possible for a British Admiral "to lose the war in an afternoon", a fact that was not lost on Admiral Woodward.

The War Cabinet, by giving permission to Admiral Woodward to have CONQUEROR sink the BELGRANO, made a timely, crucial decision, particularly in light of the domestic political and international diplomatic repercussions such an act was certain to generate. However, the loss of either HERMES or INVINCIBLE would have caused enormous British loss of life, crippled the task force, produced acrimonious public uproar in Britain, and the

Falklands would have remained in Argentine hands. See Middlebrook, pp. 146, 151, 164.

13. For a discussion of these four purposes, see Middlebrook, pp. 96 - 102.

14. Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, pp. 107, 142. For a quick synopsis of Operativo ROSARIO, read Chenette, pp. 38 - 44. Chenette does a good job of discussing the actions of Argentina's TF 20 & TF 40, the actions of the Royal Marine garrison in preparing for the invasion (tactical surprise had been lost), Argentinean amphibious operations and the fighting that occurred on the morning of 2 April. He mentions the fighting on South Georgia as well.

15. Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed & trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 584.

16. For an Argentinean perspective on U.N. Security Council Resolution 502, see Ruben O. Moro, The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), pp. 37 - 42. The two key demands of the resolution were the immediate cessation of hostilities and an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). (Emphasis added). Moro's basic criticism of the resolution was that the Security Council, the world's peacekeeper, had handed to Great Britain the keys to warfare.

17. There were actually three committees: the military junta, the Military Committee, and the Political Committee, known as the Malvinas Working Group. The Malvinas Operational Theater, responsible for Operativo ROSARIO, was disbanded after the operation and replaced by the South Atlantic Operational Theater, set up on 7 April. Since the exact role of the Governor, General Menendez was unclear, he put himself in charge of the Malvinas Joint Command. However, General Menendez was not prepared to be the military leader but the political leader of the Malvinas. The lack of military preparations and scant amount of military planning accomplished meant the Argentine political and military leadership still expected a diplomatic solution to occur which would preclude the need for serious fighting. They saw the British task force steaming south as a form of military pressure to aid the diplomacy to get the best advantage for the negotiated settlement that would ensue. Thus, the Argentine leaders were "wed" to the idea that the critical battle was diplomatic, a fatal flaw. See Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, pp. 142 - 149.

18. James R. McDonough, LtCol, USA, War in the Falklands: The Use and Disuse of Military Theory (Alexandria, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1987), p. 23.

19. Haggart, pp. 87 - 88. Unfortunately, the war was over before the Sea Kings were operational. Another expedient used by RAF and RN Harriers was to stuff chaff bundles in their speed brake wells and between the bombs and pylons to reduce the threat posed by surface-to-air munitions. For a detailed account of the various innovative solutions devised by the British to counter their shortcomings in the various facets of warfare (logistics, munitions, AAW, etc), see Christopher J. Bowie, Coping With The Unexpected: Great Britain And The War In The South Atlantic (Alexandria, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1985).

20. Jorge L. Colombo, Cdr, ARA, "'Super Etendard' Naval Aircraft Operations during the Malvinas War," Naval War College Review, May/June 1984, p. 22. As noted in endnote 11 and reiterated by Cdr Colombo, the successful use of the Exocet missile against the SHEFFIELD obligated the British fleet to change its location and defensive disposition. For a description of the preparation for and conduct of the attack on the SHEFFIELD, see Colombo, pp. 13 - 22.

21. McDonough, p. 29. For an Argentine perspective and detailed account of the battle for Goose Green-Port Darwin, see Moro, pp. 257 - 267. For a British perspective and detailed account of the battle, see Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, The Battle For The Falklands (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1983), pp. 233 - 253.

22. For an interesting commentary on the effectiveness of the RN and the Argentine Navy's actions prior to the sinking of the BELGRANO, read Carlos E. Zartmann, ARN (ret), Proceedings, February, 1983, p. 87. In his commentary, Zartmann explains that "The Argentine fleet was kept in home waters by two concurring factors that had decisive influence...: British attack nuclear submarines and U.S. electronic surveillance satellites. The first posed a threat to the very existence of Argentine naval power, which was very difficult to accept since the conflict was limited in nature and possession of the islands at stake did not represent an objective upon which the survival of Argentina depended. The naval command had to weigh carefully the necessity of risking the destruction of the nation's total small and costly surface fleet. Not to incur any unnecessary risks was a wise strategic decision..."

23. Jeffrey Ethell and Alfred Price, Air War South Atlantic (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1983), p. 218.

24. Moro points out that five Argentine regiments never saw action, which meant that less than 50% of the troops deployed to the Malvinas were effectively (sic) employed. See Moro, p. 316.

25. Harry D. Train, II, U.S. Navy (ret), "An Analysis Of The Falkland/Malvinas Islands Campaign", Naval War College Review, Winter 1988, pp. 33 - 50. Admiral Train noted: "A small force of Argentine diesel electric submarines created enormous concern for the British. It dictated, at least as much as did the air threat, the conduct of British naval operations and caused the expenditure of a vast supply of ASW weapons." p. 40.

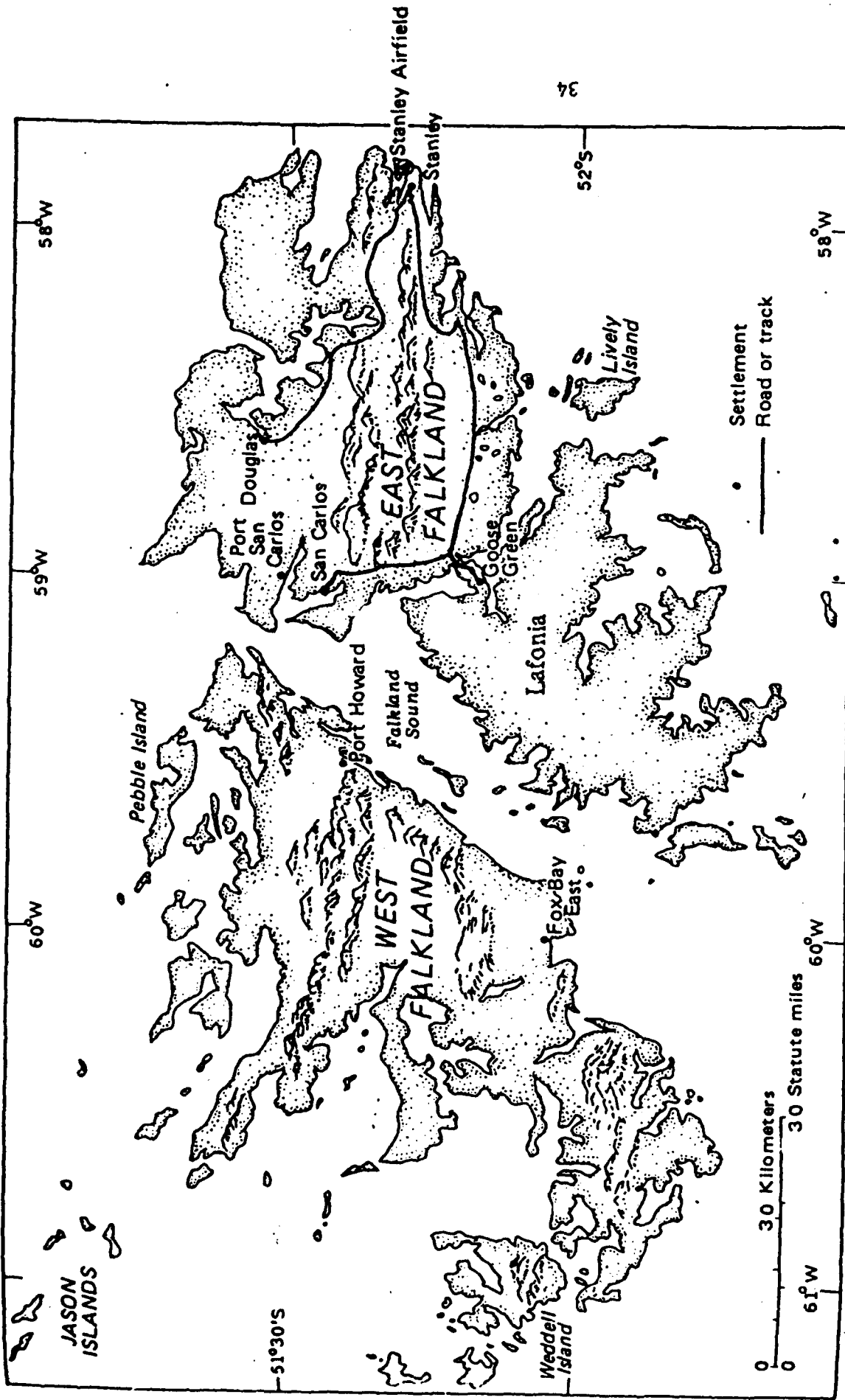
26. Brigadier General Crespo, Commander, Air Force South, was faced with organizing, at very short notice, a combat ready air arm to take on an enemy that outclassed him in both means and technology, and in a theater of operations that was alien to an air force that had neither the means nor the training for over-sea operations. The command relationship for General Crespo was difficult as well since he had no control over any of the air power stationed in the Malvinas. See Moro, pp. 88 - 89. For a comparison of British and Argentine organization charts, see Moro, p. 78.

27. "Perhaps the most important operational lesson of the Falklands War is the crucial value of having forces already on station in a crisis area in advance of potential hostilities. The deterrent value of forces on the spot is undeniable, and in retrospect it can be convincingly argued that the junta's refusal to believe that the British would fight for the Falklands was fatally encouraged by the absence of all but a token British force presence on the islands or in the South Atlantic prior to the Argentine invasion." Jeffrey Record, "The Falklands War," Washington Quarterly, 5 (Autumn 1982), p. 48.

28. "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that a statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking...This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive." Clausewitz, pp. 88 - 89.

29. James D. Hessman, "The Lessons of the Falklands," Sea Power, July 1982, p. 18. Another key "strategic" conclusion is that "a country whose military forces are not tailored to its commitments is flirting with decline and defeat. This is clearly the overarching message of the Falklands battle." See Thomas H. Moorer, Admiral, USN (ret), and Alvin J. Cottrell, "In the Wake of the Falklands Battle," Strategic Review, Summer 1982, p. 28. Another important "operational" conclusion is: "...there is merit in military theory, that sound tactical doctrine tied to an operational plan that pursues a strategic objective is a winning combination,... and that military operations must be an extension of political policy and not bank on political maneuvers to salvage a poor operational plan." See McDonough, p. 40.





(Bill Hazelup, INR, Department of State)

Source: U.S. Dept. of State, Department of State Bulletin. Vol 82, No. 2063, June 1982, p. 83.

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